AN

# AFFECTIONATE

# ADDRESS,

INTENDED

TO PROMOTE THE PIETY

OF

*YOUNG CHRISTIANS.*

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*I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.* Prov. viii. 17.

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SECOND EDITION.

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*The ſpirit which for ſome time has prevailed in ſpreading the knowledge of the Saviour, muſt yield the higheſt ſatisfaction to every benevolent mind. When Chriſtians are inclined, as with one heart, to unite their efforts for the ſalvation of ſinners, we have ſurely reaſon to believe, that the bleſſing of God ſhall eminently accompany their laudable exertions. We rejoice therefore in the delightful appearances of the preſent day; and hope they precede ſtill more glorious diſplays of Divine grace and faithfulneſs.*

*The inſtitution of Sabbath-evening ſchools for the religious inſtruction of children, deſerves to be mentioned as one of the beſt methods of promoting the knowledge of the truth in our own country. Many of theſe have been lately eſtabliſhed in Edinburgh and other places. It were much to be wiſhed, that the attention of the Lord's people every where was directed to this very important object.—Theſe ſchools are kept up at ſmall expence; and, in general, are no ſooner announced, than many applications are made for admiſſion. Who can tell what happy effects might reſult from the ſerious and well-directed endeavours of the people of God?*

EDINBURGH,
May 1797.

AN

# AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS

TO

## *YOUNG CHRISTIANS.*

AMONG the various objects which intereſt the heart of the true Chriſtian, the ſituation of the riſing generation holds a diſtinguiſhed place. With anxious ſolicitude, he obſerves the prevailing temper of the youth around him, and conſiders how much depends upon them when their predeceſſors ſhall have paſſed away. Appearances of true piety in young perſons, therefore, muſt afford him peculiar pleaſure; nor will he be wanting in uſing every mean in his power to aſſiſt and encourage them. Such is the deſign of the following addreſs, which proceeds from unfeigned eſteem and affection.

It is comfortable to reflect, that there are many, even within the circle of our own obſervation, whom we can addreſs as *young Chriſtians*. We have, with heart-felt ſatisfaction, dearly beloved, obſerved the firſt dawnings of your acquaintance with God; our joy has increaſed with your growing ſerioufneſs; we have ſympathiſed with you in your temptations, and have not ceaſed to pray, that you may be carried through the dangers which ſurround you, and that your path may continue to ſhine more and more, till you have finiſhed your courſe: And now permit us, in the ſpirit of humility, to offer you a few inſtructions, to which we beg your patient attention.

We do not mean in this place, to enter into any particular detail of doctrine.—We hope, in general, you have been convinced of your guilty and depraved ſtate by nature; you have felt a total inability in yourſelves to do any thing in your own recovery; your underſtandings have, in ſome degree, been enlightened to diſcern the character of the Saviour, as revealed in the goſpel; by the power of the Holy Ghoſt, you have been enabled to believe in him for ſalvation; and you are determined through grace to cleave to the Lord with full purpoſe of heart.---We wiſh only to lay before you a

few things which ſeem intimately connected with your ſpiritual comfort and improvement, and which may aſſiſt you in making an *honourable profeſſion* of the faith of Jeſus.

And here we cannot with too much earneſtneſs recommend *the careful and daily ſtudy of the holy ſcriptures*. We begin with this as a duty of great magnitude, and as involving in it the moſt important conſequences. We deny not that a man may be finally ſaved, whoſe knowledge of divine truth may be limited and obſcure. His true enjoyment and felicity, however, muſt be proportionally limited. A diſtinct, comprehenſive, and experimental knowledge of the word of God, is a moſt valuable attainment, and is the ſource of the higheſt bleſſedneſs.---We addreſs you, dearly beloved, as beginning your Chriſtian courſe. Some of your fellow-Chriſtians have long been kept in bondage by not fully receiving, in faith and ſimplicity, the unadulterated word of God. From this cauſe have ariſen their perplexities and difficulties. Partially acquainted with the divinely-appointed mean of making men wiſe unto ſalvation, they laboured under continual doubt and uncertainty. By not giving earneſt heed to the Scriptures, as to a light ſhining in a dark place, they ſtumbled, and often fell. They did not clearly diſcern the glory and harmony of the truth, and were therefore frequently embarraſſed with what they conceived to be contradictions in doctrine.—Your own experience, we truſt, will convince you of the high advantages connected with the performance of this duty. If, with the humble and teachable ſpirit of a child, you look up to the Father of lights to teach you by his word and Spirit, you ſhall not be diſappointed. "Then ſhall you underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Your difficulties and miſconceptions ſhall gradually be cleared up. Enjoying Divine inſtruction, you ſhall poſſeſs that inward and invigorating power of the truth, by which the ſoul is transformed into the image of God. From being a babe in Chriſt, you ſhall attain the ſtate of a young man, and ſhall even go on to that of a father. "Beholding as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord, you ſhall be changed into the ſame image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

*Maintaining the ſpirit of prayer*, is alſo a duty of eſſential importance in the Chriſtian life. Hence the many exhortations to it in the word of God. The experience of thoſe who have gone before you bears witneſs, that while they neglected ſecret intercourſe with God, they felt little of the vital energy and cheering influence of the goſpel.—Dearly beloved and longed for, *pray always, watch unto prayer*. Unleſs you attend to this, every other mean will be unavailing. You may indeed attain much knowledge, and be able fluently to communicate that knowledge; but the power of the word upon your own heart and conſcience will be indeed partial. Living in the neglect of ſo plain a duty, you will not be able to reſiſt the painful accuſations of conſcience, nor will a ſerene calm and compoſure poſſeſs your mind. ——With the utmoſt ſolicitude, therefore, we exhort you to be inſtant in prayer. With pleaſure we obſerve your punctuality in attending ſocial and public ordinances: See that you alſo abound in ſecret devotion. To ſecret duties you want ſome incitements which often ſtimulate to public duties. But ſurely the command of God, the example of Chriſt, and the ſolid benefits we ourſelves derive from the performance of them, ſhould be conſidered as prevailing motives. Forget not, dearly beloved, the ſaying of your compaſſionate Saviour, "Pray to thy Father, who ſeeth in ſecret; and thy Father, who ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly." Spread your diſcouragements before him; and your hearts ſhall be relieved. Tell him the ſnares which ſurround you; and he will ſhew you a way of eſcape.—Your happieſt moments in this world, we aſſure you, will be thoſe employed in this manner. Enjoying fellowſhip with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt, you will not regret the loſs of thoſe poor, fading pleaſures which others of your own age and ſtation may enjoy; nor will you repent, that you devoted your youthful days to the ſervice of your bleſſed Redeemer.—We ſincerely pray, that our God may pour upon you the ſpirit of prayer and ſupplication; aſſured, that, in that caſe, you ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful, but ſhall always abound in the work of the Lord.

Our urgency, however, in recommending your conſcientious obſervance of *ſecret* duties, is by no means in-

tended to ſuperſede your diligent attendance upon *public ordinances*. You have experienced the benign and happy influence of the goſpel; and you eſteem every opportunity of attaining more enlarged knowledge of it a real privilege. As new-born babes, you deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. Your ſouls long, yea even faint for the courts of the Lord. We have little occaſion therefore to urge you upon this head. Suffer us, however, to remind you to take heed with what ſpirit you attend ordinances. In every part of divine worſhip, your work is more immediately with God himſelf. Beware therefore of placing confidence in means. The true miniſters of Jeſus wiſh not to aſſume the place of their Maſter. They know, that, of themſelves, they can do you no ſervice. "For the Lord giveth wiſdom, out of *his* mouth cometh underſtanding." If with ſimplicity of heart you attend upon the Lord himſelf in his ordinances, you will find them to be *green paſtures*. Jeſus will meet with you, and bleſs you. He is preſent in the aſſemblies of his people. His eye fixes, with peculiar delight, on the young ſeekers of his face. He will gather you with his arm; he will even carry you in his boſom. You believe theſe things as teſtified by God in his word; nay, you feel, in ſome degree, their accompliſhment. Follow on then, dearly beloved, to know the Lord. Take with you words, and ſay unto him, "Bleſſed Saviour, thou alone canſt give efficacy to thine own inſtitutions. At thy feet I deſire to ſit, and learn of thee. Let thy doctrine drop as the rain; let thy ſpeech diſtil as the dew, as the ſmall rain upon the tender herb, and as the ſhowers upon the graſs. Let wiſdom enter into my heart; let knowledge be pleaſant unto my ſoul. As yet I am ignorant, and know nothing as I ought to know; but thou haſt promiſed to teach me. I believe thy promiſe; and wait upon thee, in the humble confidence, that thou wilt lead me into all truth." --Believe it, O humbled ſoul, none ever truſted the Saviour and were diſappointed.

We feel tenderly concerned, dearly beloved, to remove every thing out of your way, that might tend to retard your Chriſtian courſe. Many young believers, we know, are often not a little perplexed with *the numerous di-*

*ſtinctions* which obtain among profeſſing Chriſtians. Let not theſe, however, diſtreſs or alarm you. The word of God is the only rule of your faith and practice. Search it diligently; humbly depending upon the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, by whom believers are led into all truth. Thus ſhall you be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding, and be enabled to walk worthy of God unto all well-pleaſing. Let your obedience, dearly beloved, be univerſal. Then do ye prove yourſelves the diſciples of Chriſt in truth, when you do whatever he commands you. Patiently commit yourſelves to the teaching of God; and he will guide you through every difficulty. Act from principle, and as under the eye of God; not from humour or caprice. Neither give way to harſhneſs and ſeverity of ſpirit. Such a temper is by no means conſiſtent with real Chriſtianity. Jeſus is your ſhepherd; you are the lambs of his paſture: he will therefore make you to lie down in green paſtures; he will lead you beſide the ſtill waters.

By diligently obſerving theſe things, dearly beloved, we hope, that your profiting will quickly appear unto all men. Nevertheleſs, ſuffer yet a little the word of exhortation. Our hearts are deeply intereſted in you; and we have no greater joy than to hear that you walk in the truth. We beſeech you then *to maintain the utmoſt integrity of character*. There muſt be a marked diſtinction between the people of God and worldly men. The laws of Chriſt form the great principles of your conduct. In ſo far as you deviate from theſe, you deny the faith of our Lord Jeſus. Simplicity and godly ſincerity are the peculiar ornaments of Chriſtianity. Diſſimulation of any kind, by no means comports with the character of a follower of the bleſſed Jeſus. The ſmalleſt departure from ſtrict veracity muſt wound your conſcience, and detract from your reſpectability: Above all it grieves your Redeemer, quenches the Spirit, and brings a reproach on your profeſſion. Any thing gained by diſſimulation is a poor recompenſe indeed for that which is loſt by it. Fair and open uprightneſs of conduct recommends your profeſſion as amiable and inviting. If in any caſe you behave otherwiſe, you belie the truth.

Affectionately desirous to behold in you every grace that should adorn the Christian character, we also remind you of the necessity of studying *modesty* and *meekness* in your whole deportment. Humility and self-denial are leading features of the disciples of Jesus. They are peculiarly ornamental in young believers. It is the duty of the people of God to prefer one another. It is yours particularly highly to esteem your elder brethren. In so far as you possess the genuine spirit of the gospel, such will be your conduct. Pride, frowardness, and self-will, proceed from the corruption of human nature.

We think it necessary however to caution you against a *sinful easiness of temper*. We have seen the baneful effects of this disposition in some of whose sincerity we were fully persuaded. Believers must act upon principle. To make compliances, which lead out of the immediate path of duty, cannot fail to disturb the mind of a tender Christian. Firmness and fidelity in following Christ, is at once your duty and interest. He, and he alone, is your master. If any thing interfere with your duty to him, integrity demands, that you obey *Him* whose you are, and whom you serve. You cannot otherwise prove your singleness of heart, in "following the Lord fully."

Early inclined to seek the God of your fathers, we congratulate you, our dear younger brethren, on your escape from the grosser pollutions of the world through lust. Think it not needless, however, to suggest to you the advice of Paul to Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart," 2 Tim. ii. 22. Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; commit them to his care and keeping. Follow your immaculate Saviour, by observing the strictest purity. Your brethren behold you with peculiar complacency; grieve not not their hearts by any indecency. Live under the influence of the truth; and the refined joys of religion will render insipid the pleasures of sin, which at last bite as a serpent, and sting like an adder.

We suppose you, our dear young friends, to be as yet under the care of your fathers, tutors or masters. We beseech you to honour the doctrine of God our Saviour

in theſe ſtations. You are not ignorant of the inſtructions given you in the ſacred Scriptures on this very intereſting ſubject. Be ſolicitous that they may be realized in your conduct. A ſervant who acts conſcientiouſly is an ineſtimable bleſſing in ſociety, and peculiarly recommends his profeſſion. If you enjoy the privilege of ſerving believing maſters, remember the injunction of the Holy Ghoſt, "*Deſpiſe them not;* bur rather do them ſervice, becauſe they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." By unaſſuming, reſpectful behaviour, you both diſcharge your duty to God, and ſecure the favour and eſteem of your maſters.---Guard againſt every irregularity to which your preſent warm feelings might lead you. Religion by no means excuſes indolence. You ſerve the Lord Chriſt by diligence in buſineſs, as well as by fervency of ſpirit. Negligence is no part of the Chriſtian character. He is the moſt advanced and happy Chriſtian, who approves himſelf faithful in whatever Providence calls him to do. And what a noble teſtimony to religion, when obſervers are obliged to acknowledge that converts act with a propriety and regularity to which they were formerly ſtrangers.

While you abide under the genuine influence of the goſpel, contentment and happineſs will follow you from day to day. Be not haſty therefore in making any change in your outward condition. We are naturally ſelf-willed, and impatient of reſtraint. Sinful ambition is one of the ſtrongeſt corruptions in our depraved nature. We are ever prone to fancy a higher degree of happineſs connected with ſome other condition than our own. It is your duty to ſubmit yourſelves implicitly to the conduct of infinite Wiſdom. Pray that the Lord may ſubdue the impetuoſity of your tempers, and enable you to diſtruſt yourſelves. In due time you ſhall be ſatisfied that he ordereth every thing well for you. Young and inexperienced, you indeed ſtand on ſlippery places, expoſed to many temptations. But God has promiſed to ſuſtain you. Let all your affairs be conducted by prayer, and by laying yourſelves open to the direction of God in his word. Comforts enjoyed in this way acquire a double reliſh, and even croſſes and difficulties are rendered comparatively eaſy.---Thus will you advance in ſolid religion. Freed from much pain and anxiety, you will poſ-

ſeſs your ſouls in patience, ſatisfied in the Lord, as the maintainer of your lot, as the portion of your inheritance.

The glitter of this world, indeed, often dazzles the eyes of young perſons, and uneaſy deſires for attaining it ariſe in their minds. Even the real Chriſtian ſometimes envies the proſperity of the wicked. Such conduct, however, is vain and fooliſh. We hope the Lord will deliver you from its prevalence. Let the vanity of earthly objects, and the glorious proſpect unfolded by the Goſpel, be ever preſent to your mind. Look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, *fading and tranſitory*, but the things which are not ſeen are *eternal*. If the Lord has placed you in a ſuperior ſtation, abuſe not his kindneſs by haughtineſs of ſpirit. He who was pleaſed to give, may ſoon take away. If your lot be poor and needy, abide cloſely by the line of duty, and the Lord, if he ſees it good for you, may give you proſperity; but if not, you have no cauſe of diſcouragement. It is the doing of the Lord, which ſhould reconcile you to every condition. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low; becauſe as the flower of the graſs, he ſhall paſs away."

We have thus addreſſed you, dearly beloved, in the bowels of Chriſtian affection. We have offered you our beſt advice in the integrity of our heart. Upon every remembrance of you our ſoul is filled with joy. We truſt you are raiſed up to honour the Saviour. Still, however, our joy is mixed with trembling. Some we have beheld, who for a ſeaſon ſeemed to run well, return to the world. We pitied their infatuation and deplored their miſery. Concerning you, however, we hope better things. You have ſet out well in the morning of your life. But how often is a bright morning ſucceeded by a cloudy day! We earneſtly warn you againſt *ſeeming to come ſhort*. Guard againſt ſpiritual pride. In no inſtance indulge duplicity of ſpirit. Remember that you are always under the eye of God, and that hypocriſy is an abomination to him. Be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus. "He that abideth in me, and

I in him, ſaith your bleſſed Redeemer, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he ſhall appear ye may have confidence, and not be aſhamed before him at his coming."---O may the Divine Saviour ſpread his everlaſting arms around you! May he preſerve you blameleſs to his coming and glory! May he enable you to be highly uſeful in your day and generation! After having honourably finiſhed your courſe, you may eternally flouriſh in immortal bleſſedneſs!

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This addreſs will probably come in the way of ſome young perſons, who are as yet totally unconcerned about the ſtate of their ſouls. Over you alſo our bowels yearn with the greateſt tenderneſs. Enjoying youthful health and vigour, you baniſh from your hearts every thought of a ſerious nature. Nay you profeſs to pity thoſe of your acquaintance who have eſcaped from the pollutions of the world, and are ſtudying to obey the God who made them, and by whom they are preſerved. Amidſt your folly and infatuation, however, you are ſometimes obliged to be ſerious, and are unable to reſiſt uneaſy thoughts of a future ſtate. You feel you are immortal creatures, and your conſciences alarm you with the dread of puniſhment. We ſincerely wiſh you would attend to the voice of conſcience, but eſpecially to the voice of your bleſſed Redeemer. We feel pained, we aſſure you, at the thought of your paſſing away your days in vice and folly. Fain would we perſuade you to flee from the wrath to come. Why ſpend your days in vanity, and in following the deſires of your depraved hearts? the end of ſuch a courſe is death.—We mean not to anſwer your objections againſt believing the truth. None of them are of any weight, if you judged of them aright. You are diſpoſed, we know, to conceive meanly of the Scriptures, and you revile their appellation, *the word of God*. Were your minds, however, opened to underſtand them, you would be ſurpriſed to find them every way worthy of God, and in all reſpects ſuited to you.—Do you not, in your ſolitary moments, feel you need information reſpecting a coming eternity? Might we prevail upon you then to read your Bible? All that information you will find there; and God may be pleaſed to bleſs the attempt to your

everlaſting advantage.—We can form ſome conception of your preſent feelings from what we ourſelves have felt. Once, dear fellow-ſinners, we were of your mind, preferring the moſt trifling enjoyments and ſinful amuſements to the ſervice of God. "We held the ſaints in deriſion, and made them even a proverb of reproach. We fools counted their lives madneſs, and their end to be without honour." Now, however, we are happily undeceived, and ſolicitous to undeceive you. Strong prejudices againſt religion, we know, often ariſe in your minds, from an apprehenſion that, if you become ſerious, gloomineſs of temper muſt immediately take place. This, however, is a groundleſs miſtake. Godlineſs is profitable for this, as well as for a future life. All the ſaints have found wiſdom's ways to be ways of pleaſantneſs, and her paths to be paths of peace; and we aſſure you, that if you now hear the voice of Chriſt, and believe in him, you ſhall find them to be ſo too.---Say not, theſe are chimeras which have no exiſtence but in the diſturbed brains of fools. Do you diſcredit the teſtimony of your own ſenſes? Have you never beheld the bitter anguiſh, and fearful forebodings of your dying acquaintance? Did they not tell you how vain and fooliſh it is to reſiſt God and to ſin againſt him? How ſoon may their caſe be yours!---Think not to fortify your minds againſt fear by the reaſonings of infidelity. God, in a moment, may awaken our conſciences, and make the terrors of hell to encompaſs you. The truths of God are not leſs true, becauſe you diſcredit them.---In the height of earthly enjoyment, do you not ſtill feel ſomething awanting? In our former ſtate, we did ſo; but we have now found that *good* which we in vain ſought for among the creatures; and to the attainment of it we wiſh to direct you. It is contained in the Goſpel, which is addreſſed to you, and you are now warned and entreated not to hear it in vain.---O come to theſe living waters, and you ſhall never thirſt. Hear the Saviour of ſinners, ſaying to you, "Hearken unto me, O ye children; for bleſſed are they that keep my way. Hear inſtruction, and be wiſe, and refuſe it not. For whoſo findeth me, findeth life, and ſhall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that ſinneth againſt me wrongeth his own ſoul: All they that hate me love death."

*THE END.*